

Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15

L-03 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 AID-05 IGA-02 MC-02

ACDA-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00 DHA-02 EB-07 DODE-00 NEA-10

IO-13 /108 W

-----114891 090920Z /10

R 082312Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6691

INFO USCINCSO

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 4306

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, GT, US

SUBJ: FMS ORDER FOR FIVE MILLION ROUNDS OF AMMUNITION

REF: A. GUATEMALA 3776; B. GUATEMALA 3371; C. GUATEMALA 2559

1. DURING AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON THE PRESIDENT JULY 7, LAUGERUD BROUGHT UP THE PROBLEMS GUATEMALA HAS BEEN HAVING IN GETTING 5.56 MM AMMUNITION FOR THE ISRAELI GALIL RIFLES WITH WHICH GUATEMALA'S ENTIRE ARMY IS NOW EQUIPPED, AND THE REQUEST GOG HAD MADE ON APRIL 27 FOR A LETTER OF OFFER FOR FIVE MILLION ROUNDS FROM THE U.S.

2. PRESIDENT SAID THAT WHEN ISRAEL INFORMED GOG THAT IT COULD NOT SUPPLY AMMUNITION FOR THE RIFLES, GUATEMALA HAD NEGOTIATED A DEAL WITH TAIWAN, AS IT KNEW THAT TAIWAN HAD SUPPLIED 5.56 AMMUNITION TO THE US FORCES IN VIETNAM. DESPITE THE FACT THAT GOG DEALT DIRECTLY GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT WITH ROC, TAIWAN DID NOT TELL IT THAT THE SHIPMENT FOR GUATEMALA HAD BEEN REJECTED BY USG AS SUBSTANDARD. THEY HAD EVENTUALLY HAD TO RETURN THE AMMUNITION TO CHINA. GOG HAD THEN TURNED TO A NATO COUNTRY, AND THE FIRST SHIPMENT OF AMMUNITION HAD

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WORKED FINE. THE SECOND DID NOT WORK WELL, BECAUSE IT TURNED OUT THE PRIMER HAD BEEN MADE TO NATO SPECIFICATIONS RATHER THAN TO US MILITARY ONES. THOSE FIVE MILLION ROUNDS WERE ACCORDINGLY SOLD TO "GENERAL SOMOZA", AND THE MONEY USED IN PARTIAL PAYMENT FOR A TEN MILLION ROUND PURCHASE FROM PORTUGAL. THE FIRST SHIPMENT OF THIS ORDER, 1.8 MILLION ROUNDS, HAD BEEN "STOLEN" BY GOVERNMENT OF

BARBADOS, WHEN IT SEIZED THE CHARTERED AIRCRAFT THAT WAS BRINGING THE SHIPMENT TO GUATEMALA. THE PLANE AND THE CREW HAD BEEN RELEASED, BUT BARBADOS HAD KEPT THE AMMUNITION.

3. EVEN BEFORE THIS SEQUENCE OF EVENTS HAD PLAYED ITSELF OUT, THE PRESIDENT SAID, GUATEMALA HAD ORDERED FIVE MILLION ROUNDS FROM USG BECAUSE US STANDARDS OF QUALITY CONTROL WERE THE HIGHEST.

4. AMBASSADOR SAID THAT HE WOULD BE FRANK WITH THE PRESIDENT, AS PRESIDENT HAD BEEN WITH HIM. WHEN HE ARRIVED IN WASHINGTON FOR CONSULTATIONS ON JUNE 13, THE AMMUNITION ORDER WAS AT THE HEAD OF HIS LIST OF PENDING ITEMS HE WANTED TO EXPEDITE. UNFORTUNATELY, THE DAY HE ARRIVED, GOG HAD ISSUED ITS COMMUNIQUE ACCUSING BRITAIN AND BELIZE OF COMPLICITY WITH CUBA IN AIDING AND ABETTING SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES IN GUATEMALA. THE CALL-UP OF GUATEMALAN RESERVES HAD FOLLOWED. IN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES, THERE WAS NO CHANCE OF EXPEDITING THE AMMUNITION ORDER. IT WAS THE AMBASSADOR'S HOPE THAT THE PRESENT LEVEL OF TENSION SURROUNDING THE BELIZE DISPUTE WILL SOON BE DE-ESCALATED. WHEN THAT HAPPENS, HE WILL RENEW HIS REQUEST TO WASHINGTON FOR PROMPT ACTION ON THE AMMUNITION SHIPMENT. HE HOPED THAT IN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES THE DEPARTMENT WOULD BE RESPONSIVE TO HIS REQUEST.
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5. PRESIDENT LAUGERUD SAID HE UNDERSTOOD COMPLETELY, AND HAD SUSPECTED THAT THIS MIGHT BE THE REASON FOR THE RECENT DELAY. IN THE MEANTIME HE WOULD CONTINUE HIS EFFORTS TO OBTAIN A REASONABLE QUANTITY OF AMMUNITION ELSEWHERE. PORTUGAL HAS A GOOD FACTORY FOR AMMUNITION OF THIS TYPE. ITALY WILL START PRODUCTION SOON. HE HAS ALSO RECEIVED AN OFFER FROM AUSTRIA, BUT HE TOLD THEM THEY MUST FIRST SEND A LARGE ENOUGH SAMPLE TO GUATEMALA FOR THE GOG TO BE ABLE TO TEST THE QUALITY CONTROL.
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Message Attributes

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